

FINAL

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WETLANDS RECOVERY PROJECT BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MINUTES

MAY 18, 2001

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

1. Meeting attendees:

- Bill Ahern (representing John Lormon), California Coastal Conservancy
- Wayne Baglin, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Bill Campbell (representing Arthur Baggett), State Water Resources Control Board
- Susan Cloke, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Helen Flach, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Nancy Gilbert (representing Mike Spear), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Susan Hansch (representing Peter Douglas), California Coastal Commission
- Mary Nichols, California Resources Agency
- Charles Raysbrook (representing Robert Hight), California Department of Fish and Game
- Jim Slawson, National Marine Fisheries Service
- Alexis Strauss, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Terry Tamminen, Environment Now, Chair of Public Advisory Committee
- Paul Thayer, State Lands Commission
- Steve Weisberg, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, Chair of Science Advisory Panel
- Mary Wright, California Department of Parks and Recreation
- Dan Young (representing Peter Madsen), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

2. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Jill Zachary, program manager of the City of Santa Barbara's Creeks Program, welcomed the Board of Governors to Santa Barbara. She described the City's new creeks program, funded by Measure B, which increased the transient occupancy tax (hotel tax) by two percent. This measure will bring approximately \$2 million per year to the City's Creeks Program. The program will focus on water quality improvements and habitat restoration in creeks and wetlands. The Creeks Program is housed in the Department of Parks and Recreation, but is coordinated with other City departments including Public Works.

Assemblymember Hannah-Beth Jackson addressed the Board and commended the Wetlands Recovery Project for its work. She emphasized the importance of protecting our coastal wetlands, and doing so in an organized, comprehensive way. She has sponsored a bill this year, AB640, which would require all local communities to update their Local Coastal Programs, some of which are 15 years old. Assemblymember Jackson reviewed some of the

programs in the proposed State budget for fiscal year 2001-2002 related to wetlands recovery and water quality. She also discussed the importance of the effort to remove Matilija Dam from the Ventura River.

3. Chair's Report

Secretary Mary Nichols reported on the continuing growth of the Wetlands Recovery Project, and in particular the growing involvement of local communities. Related to this, the County Task Forces have taken on a growing role, and assisted in selecting the projects on this year's Work Plan. The Task Forces will also work with the Managers Group on the next Symposium and the WRP Regional Strategy. Secretary Nichols highlighted some of the large projects on the updated Work Plan, including acquisitions at Los Cerritos and along the Santa Clara River. She pointed out the importance of also continuing to fund smaller, community-based projects. The WRP is proposing to set-up a small grants program to address that need. The Secretary reported that the WRP is negotiating with Southern California Edison regarding a piece of property adjacent to the Los Cerritos wetlands that might be useful in facilitating the Los Cerritos acquisitions and restoration. Finally, Secretary Nichols provided an update on AB2286 which was passed last year and requires the State to update its inventory of wetlands. This wetlands inventory will be the first research and data acquisition project implemented as part of the California Continuing Resource Investment Strategy Project (CCRISP).

4. Wetlands Managers Group Report on 2000-2001 Projects

Paul Michel, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, reported on the recent Coastal America retreat. Coastal America is a partnership of federal agencies working to facilitate and expedite wetlands restoration projects. The retreat emphasized that it is regional efforts like the WRP that have been the most effective in getting work done.

The WRP has spent to date approximately \$20 million of state and federal funds. The WRP has matured and is becoming a more effective and efficient mechanism for getting projects done, involving the public, and advancing the science of wetlands restoration. The County Task Forces have been a key element of this success. Mr. Michel gave a brief overview of projects completed or funded in the past year including:

- Tijuana Estuary Restoration, Phase II – project is jointly funded by the WRP and EPA.
- San Elijo Lagoon – completed enhancement of 3 acres adjacent to lagoon by removing exotics.
- Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration Plan
- Matilija Dam Removal Feasibility Study
- Arroyo Hondo acquisition – providing \$1 million in WRP funding and the acquisition should be complete by October.
- Santa Barbara Streams Restoration Project

Key WRP projects which are ongoing include the erosion control and habitat restoration project at Goat Canyon; acquisition of properties at the Huntington Beach wetlands, which will be partially funded by EPA settlement funds; and the Los Cerritos and Ormond Beach acquisitions.

Melanie Denninger, Coastal Conservancy, provided the Board with a financial update on the WRP. During 00-01 fiscal year, the Conservancy will have encumbered approximately \$6 million in WRP funds. These \$6 million leveraged roughly \$8 million in federal, other state, local, and private funding.

The financial outlook for next year is fairly good. The withdrawal from the market by Southern California Edison of its Ormond Beach property made a considerable amount of WRP funds available again. In addition, there are some funds from previous years that have not yet been encumbered and will be available in the 2001-2002 fiscal year. A settlement agreement between Edison and certain private properties regarding impacts of the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant may direct additional funds to WRP projects. The Resources Agency is seeking additional funds for the WRP Science Panel which would enable them to direct and undertake relevant research. Other potential funding sources for WRP projects include State Water Board funding through Proposition 13 for water quality projects, including wetlands and watershed restoration projects, as well as potential funding from the National Marine Fisheries Service for steelhead projects.

While the current financial outlook is good, Ms. Denninger highlighted several key financial concerns, including:

- Ensuring that the \$2.9 million in bond funds targeted for the WRP in the revised State budget are approved.
- Ensuring ongoing funding to our state agency partners and the ability of those agencies to use funds at their discretion.
- Ensuring continued funding for Conservancy staff working on WRP projects.
- Planning ahead for big ticket items, particularly by partnering with federal agencies.
- Finding funding for ongoing maintenance and management of sites, for the Science Advisory Panel and related research, and funding for the Task Forces.

5. 2001-2002 Work Plan

Paul Michel presented the 49 projects recommended for the 2001-2002 Work Plan. These projects are summarized below.

1. *Goat Canyon Enhancement Project* -- Construct sediment retention basins along the creek, reconstruct a portion of the historic Goat Canyon Creek stream channel, and restore riparian habitat in the project vicinity.
2. *Tijuana River Valley Arundo Eradication Project* -- Develop a watershed-wide Arundo control plan in the Tijuana River Valley, and implement first phase of Arundo removal.

3. *Otay Mesa Vernal Pools Acquisition* -- Acquire up to 170 acres of vernal pool habitat on four parcels on the Otay River mesa.
4. *Famosa Slough Culvert Extension and Retrofit* -- Reactivate an inoperable culvert between Famosa Channel and Famosa Slough to increase the tidal prism in the slough.
5. *Rose Creek Enhancement Plan* -- Prepare final design and engineering plans for projects recommended in the Rose Creek Enhancement Plan.
6. *Los Penasquitos Hydrology and Sedimentation Study* -- Prepare a hydrology and sedimentation study for the Los Peñasquitos Watershed and Lagoon system to characterize the sources and amounts of increased sediment loads and freshwater flows into the lagoon.
7. *Escondido Creek Restoration - Bumann Site* -- Remove invasive species and revegetate approximately 1.6 acres along 750 feet of Escondido Creek, a tributary to San Elijo Lagoon.
8. *San Elijo Lagoon Non-native Plant Management* -- Remove targeted non-native species from approximately 40 acres around San Elijo Lagoon.
9. *San Elijo Lagoon Acquisition Program* -- Acquire up to 100 acres of property along the margins of San Elijo Lagoon.
10. *San Elijo Lagoon Tidal Circulation Program Augmentation* -- Augment the San Elijo Lagoon Tidal Circulation endowment to ensure that the lagoon inlet remains open all year.
11. *ESD Park Riparian Restoration (Cottonwood Creek)* -- Recreate portions of riparian stream corridor on Cottonwood and Moonlight Creeks, in northern San Diego County.
12. *Buena Vista Creek Acquisition -- Sherman Parcel* -- Acquire approximately 133.8 acres of land along Buena Vista Creek.
13. *Wood Canyon Stream Stabilization and Restoration* -- Restore degraded riparian habitat along approximately 3.5 miles of Wood Canyon Creek and its tributaries.
14. *Aliso Creek Dairy Fork Biofiltration Basin* -- Create and vegetated water quality treatment system and riparian corridor on a reach of Dairy Fork, a tributary to Aliso Creek.
15. *Serrano Creek Stabilization and Restoration* -- Stabilize and restore approximately 1.5 miles of Serrano Creek, a tributary to San Diego Creek and Upper Newport Bay.
16. *San Joaquin Marsh Enhancement - Phase II* -- Revise, as necessary, the conceptual plan for Phase II of the San Joaquin Marsh Enhancement Plan, which includes excavation of a seasonal pond area and drainage channel, and prepare supplemental CEQA document.
17. *Talbert Marsh Tidal Channel Enhancement Design* -- Prepare plan to enhance tidal exchange into the 25-acre Talbert Marsh.
18. *Huntington Beach Acquisitions* -- Acquire from willing sellers properties in private ownership within the Huntington Beach Wetlands complex.
19. *Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project* -- Develop a restoration plan for Colorado Lagoon, a 44-acre saltwater lagoon connected to Alamitos Bay.

20. *El Dorado Wetlands Restoration Plan* -- Prepare a plan to restore up to 20 acres of wetlands at the confluence of the San Gabriel River and Coyote Creek, adjacent to the El Dorado Nature Park.
21. *Coyote Creek Watershed Plan* -- Prepare Watershed Management Plan for Coyote Creek, a tributary to the San Gabriel River.
22. *Hellman Ranch Acquisition (Los Cerritos)* -- Acquire approximately 100 acres of the Los Cerritos Wetlands located on the Hellman Ranch property.
23. *Bryant Acquisition (Los Cerritos)* -- Acquire the 85-acre Bryant Ranch property, a portion of the Los Cerritos Wetland.
24. *Los Cerritos Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan* -- Prepare conceptual restoration plan for the Los Cerritos Wetlands.
25. *Bixby Ranch Company Acquisition (Los Cerritos)* -- Acquire the 181-acre Bixby Ranch portion of the Los Cerritos Wetlands complex.
26. *Big Tujunga Wash Revegetation and Restoration* -- Enhance approximately 150 acres of the Big Tujunga Wash by removing invasive species, planting native vegetation, and repairing eroding trails.
27. *Lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Habitat Needs Assessment* -- Prepare a regional guide for habitat restoration in the Los Angeles River and San Gabriel River Basins to guide the creation of an ecologically linked network of open space.
28. *Lower Los Angeles River Acquisitions* -- Acquire properties adjacent to the lower Los Angeles River suitable for wetland and riparian restoration projects.
29. *Upper Zuniga Road (Secret Valley) Acquisitions* -- Acquire approximately 120 acres in the upper Topanga watershed including Zuniga Pond, a man-made pond near Upper Zuniga Road in the Topanga Creek watershed to protect western pond turtle habitat, a state-listed species of special concern.
30. *Malibu Lagoon Habitat Enhancement* -- Prepare engineering designs to reconfigure tidal channels in two areas of Malibu Lagoon to enhance tidal circulation.
31. *Malibu Lagoon Water Level Control Project* -- Install an inflatable weir to control water levels in Malibu Lagoon at times when the lagoon mouth is closed to tidal action by a sand berm.
32. *Malibu Creek Arundo Removal Project* -- Remove *Arundo donax* from approximately 5.2 miles of stream corridor along Malibu Creek.
33. *Upper Malibu Creek Feasibility Study (Rindge Dam)* -- Conduct USACOE feasibility study for management of the Upper Malibu Creek watershed.
34. *Cold Creek Riparian Upland Acquisition* -- Acquire 71.5 acres of upland and riparian habitat along Cold Creek, a tributary to Malibu Creek.
35. *Solstice Creek Steelhead Enhancement* -- Restore steelhead access to approximately 1.5 miles of Solstice Creek by removing barriers to passage.
36. *Lower Conejo Creek Acquisition* -- Acquire approximately 80 acres along Conejo Creek for restoration of flood plain and riparian habitat.

37. *Grimes Canyon Stream Restoration Project* -- Complete stream bank stabilization and revegetation project in Grimes Canyon, a tributary to Calleguas Creek.
38. *Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Plan* -- Prepare restoration plan for the 900-acre Ormond Beach wetlands area.
39. *Ormond Beach Wetlands Acquisition* -- Acquire in fee or through conservation easements, the privately owned portions of the Ormond Beach wetlands, including approximately 309 acres owned by the Metropolitan Water District (MWD).
40. *Santa Clara River Parkway Acquisitions* -- Acquisition of fee title and conservation easements along the lower 15 miles of the Santa Clara River for inclusion in the Santa Clara River Parkway.
41. *Ventura River Zellerbach Property Acquisition* -- Acquire the 105-acre Zellerbach parcel on the north side of the RV park, located within the river's floodplain.
42. *Ventura River Arundo Removal Project* -- Remove *Arundo donax* from a 5-acre parcel adjacent to the Ventura River and revegetation with native riparian species.
43. *Carpinteria Salt Marsh, Basin 1, Final Design* -- Prepare final design and engineering plans for the Carpinteria Salt Marsh, Basin 1 Enhancement.
44. *Summerland/Greenwell Preserve Restoration* -- Restore 2-acres of riparian habitat at the Summerland/Greenwell Preserve.
45. *Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Study* -- The objective of the Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Study is to obtain experimental data that can adequately address the FAA's concerns and resolve the bird-strike issue.
46. *Ellwood Beach-Santa Barbara Shores Specific Plan* -- Complete amendments to the Ellwood Beach-Santa Barbara Shores Specific Plan for County and privately owned land.
47. *Arroyo Hondo Watershed Acquisition* -- Acquire 778 acres of riparian and grassland habitat along the Arroyo Hondo on the Gaviota Coast.
48. *WRP Small Grants Program* -- Provide grants up to \$30,000 for restoration and enhancement projects consistent with the goals of the Wetlands Recovery Project.
49. *WRP Technical Assistance* -- Provide technical assistance to WRP Governing Board, Managers Group, and Science Advisory Panel to further the goals of the Recovery Project.

Board Discussion on the Work Plan

Terry Tamminen pointed out that the Nicholas Creek Restoration Project which is included in the Small Grants Program would be the first WRP project done in cooperation with Native Americans, namely the Chumash Nation. Mr. Tamminen also asked why the WRP was not involved in any of the projects currently being planned for the Ballona Creek area. Melanie Denninger clarified that the Coastal Conservancy is moving forward with the Ballona Creek projects using other sources of funding. The projects identified to date are principally associated with public access, not with wetlands or water quality, and are therefore not appropriate for the WRP.

Jim Slawson stated that since projects are approved on a consensus basis they should reflect as broad a cross-section of specific agency restoration interests as possible. He questioned whether vernal pool projects meet this objective. He did not see any resource values for fish at the Ellwood Mesa vernal pools. He also did not see any marine fish benefits from the proposed Los Angeles River acquisitions. Mr. Slawson voiced strong support for the Arroyo Honda watershed acquisition which has high resource values for steelhead trout.

Nancy Gilbert responded that vernal pools are the most imperiled wetland resource in Southern California. Ms. Gilbert stressed the resource value of the Otay Mesa pools which support seven federally-listed threatened and endangered species. 98% of the vernal pools in San Diego County have been lost. It is estimated that in San Diego County there are less than 300 acres of vernal pools left. There is potentially no longer any federal protection for these pools.

Wayne Baglin agreed that vernal pools are a highly unique habitat and an important part of the watershed system. The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board worked with Caltrans to ensure that a new highway would go around the Otay Mesa pools in order to protect them. With the changes in federal protection, the Regional Boards will play a more crucial role in protecting vernal pools.

Paul Thayer noted that the Board has had other discussions wrestling with the issue of the breadth of the WRP's efforts. He shares Mr. Slawson's concern about wanting to use our limited funding for projects which address core goals. However, he noted that there are several definitions of wetlands and not all of them support fish. Mr. Thayer also voiced some concerns about the Los Angeles River acquisitions, but noted that the WRP would be paying a fairly small percentage of the overall costs. The WRP's contribution should be proportional to wetlands benefits. It is important to partner with other entities that may have other primary focuses – such as recreation – for some of these multi-objective, urban projects.

Charles Raysbrook and Susan Hansch reiterated the comments made by Ms. Gilbert regarding the importance of vernal pool habitat.

Terry Tamminen stressed that public access and public education play a role in the WRP's goals. All of the state and federal funding that comes to the WRP comes from taxpayers. Projects in urbanized areas that educate people and make them feel a part of the natural environment builds the constituency to do projects that may be more removed from the public.

Mary Nichols commented that urban projects can not be evaluated simply on the basis of habitat values or number of species present. In highly urbanized areas, other values such as public access and education may be more important than habitat values, since human activities have largely destroyed the habitat values.

Mary Wright noted that at the 2000 Symposium there was a discussion about the role of education in the WRP's work. The consensus was that education was not a core mission of

the WRP, but that the WRP should ensure that the projects funded have access and educational components to the extent possible. She asked if that was an accurate summary of the discussion and if this was considered by the Managers Group in developing the Work Plan. Mr. Michel confirmed that the Managers Group had considered this.

Alexis Strauss questioned whether the WRP can continue to fund projects on a first-come-first-served basis. If money becomes a limiting factor, then the Board needs to have a more robust discussion of the projects and the WRP's priorities. Ms. Strauss also questioned the wide variability in restoration costs, and particularly *Arundo* removal.

Mary Nichols suggested that next year the Board should get a more thorough briefing on the projects and the project costs. Secretary Nichols advocated for always having a longer list of projects than available funding because projects may get delayed or new sources of funding may become available.

Public Comment on the Work Plan

Dennis Eschen, City of Long Beach, Parks, Recreation and Marine Department, voiced his support for several projects – the Colorado Lagoon Restoration, the El Dorado Wetlands Restoration, the Los Angeles River Acquisition, and the Los Cerritos wetlands acquisitions. The City is going ahead with its half of the El Dorado Nature Center enhancement project. The City is looking for opportunities to use the storm water detention basins adjacent to the river to restore wetlands. Projects could have both wetlands and water quality benefits.

Shirley Birosik, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, informed the Board that several groups are pursuing subwatershed management plans for the Los Angeles River, and that the LA River projects on the Work Plan would complement that work.

Susan Cloke agreed that there is currently a lot of energy and attention being focused on the Los Angeles River, and urged that the WRP play a role in these efforts.

David Pritchett noted that there is a coastal connection to the vernal pools at Ellwood Mesa because during high tides in the winter the shorebirds will move up to the mesa pools. There is less of a coastal connection with the Otay Mesa pools and this is one reason why the WRP is proposing to put in only a limited amount of funding for the acquisition.

Jim Slawson agreed to withdraw his objection to the Ellwood Mesa Vernal Pool project if it was put at the bottom of the list of project options.

Action Item: The Board adopted the 2001-2002 Work Plan.

6. Public Advisory Committee Report

Terry Tamminen highlighted key activities of the PAC, in particular efforts to secure funds for the WRP. Environment Now applied for a Proposition 13 grant from the State Water

Resources Control Board to provide funding for the 5 County Task Forces to identify and develop projects with both wetlands and water quality benefits. The proposal was well-received and is expected to be fully funded. Mr. Tamminen then showed a short video that was developed by the PAC to highlight the economic benefits of wetlands in Southern California.

Steve Aceti, California Coastal Coalition (CalCoast) and member of the PAC, reported on a recent trip to Washington D.C. to discuss formation of a California Coastal Caucus in the House of Representatives. PAC members participating on the trip included Supervisors Tom Wilson (Orange County) and Pam Slater (San Diego County). Congressman Randy Cunningham hosted a meeting with members and staff of the Southern California House delegation to discuss key issues and the potential for a caucus. Other states have very effective coastal caucuses. Following the meeting, Representatives Horn and Cunningham volunteered to serve as co-chairs for the new caucus along with two Democratic co-chairs. Issues the caucus could focus on include removal of Rindge and Matilija Dams, matching funds for the Los Cerritos Wetlands, and the proposed Coastal Sediment Management Plan.

7. Presentation by the Santa Barbara Task Force

Doug Gibson, co-chair of the San Diego County Task Force, introduced the presentation by the Santa Barbara County Task Force leaders. Mr. Gibson began by reading a quote from John McCaull, California Audubon Society and a member of the PAC, "I believe that the model of the Wetlands Recovery Project is the most interesting and far-reaching model of public participation in all California. Through the Recovery Project, NGOs and local government are working together and working with state and federal agencies in an unprecedented way."

The public's role in the WRP has evolved in three phases:

1. Advising agencies regarding their policy and program ideas.
2. Working with agencies to develop policies proposals.
3. Working with agencies to actually implement policies.

The County Task Forces are now working in this third phase. The work of the Santa Barbara Task Force illustrates this. Mr. Gibson introduced Santa Barbara County Supervisor Susan Rose, co-chair of the Santa Barbara task force.

Supervisor Rose commended the vision and commitment of the Wetlands Recovery Project and thanked the Board of Governors for the work in bringing funding to these projects. The Supervisor discussed how the Natural Resources Advisory Committee that she oversees helped to develop several of the Santa Barbara projects on the newly adopted WRP Work Plan. Supervisor Rose explained to the Board how the County, as a result of her efforts, is now using money from the tobacco settlement to fund Project Clean Water in the County.

Rob Almy, Director of Project Clean Water for the County, gave the Board a brief overview of Project Clean Water and provided details on nonpoint source pollution (NPSP) controls and how these relate to the County's stream restoration efforts. Project Clean Water is a cooperative, non-regulatory program focusing on NPSP control. Source reduction is method for reducing NPSP. Source treatment control is another method where waters are run through various kinds of filters, treatment systems, or bioswales. The County has a grant through the Coastal Conservancy aimed at testing various source treatment control systems. The County keeps a programmatic distinction between wetlands restoration efforts and source treatment control projects. Project Clean Water is focusing on reducing NPSP from existing development, since new development will be required to have nonpoint source treatment measures integrated into the development design.

Of the wetlands in Santa Barbara County, Project Clean Water is focusing primarily in the riparian/riverine wetlands. The streams in the south County vary significantly in condition. Past restoration efforts have been primarily led by the Flood Control District and non-governmental organizations and have not been well coordinated at the regional level.

Creek restoration efforts in the County have several different objectives including water quality improvements and habitat restoration. The County is developing a hydrogeomorphic (HGM) assessment tool that looks at the four basic functions of creeks: mass transport, biogeochemical cycling, plant communities, and wildlife habitat. The HGM guidebook provides a consistent, replicable method for assessing stream conditions. The tool can be used to assess restoration designs and effectiveness, and also to assess potential impacts of a development project.

Bud Laurent, Executive Director of the Community Environmental Council (CEC), discussed the role of NGOs in the WRP. He expressed concern that if project decisions continue to be made on a first-come-first-serve basis restoration and planning projects may not get funded if all the money goes to acquisitions. Mr. Laurent stressed the need for state and federal agencies to provide financial support to local NGOs in order to ensure their participation in restoration efforts. The Small Grants Program will be a step in this direction. We all need to commit to better stewardship of our resources and a critical part of this will be reaching out to non-traditional stakeholders to get them involved in the process.

8. Science Advisory Committee

Steve Weisberg gave a brief report to the Board on the activities of the Science Advisory Panel over the past six months. At the last Board meeting, the SAP made two commitments to the Board. The first was to develop a position paper that enhances the broad goals developed in the Regional Strategy to make them more useful in evaluating and prioritizing projects and assessing progress towards those goals. The SAP discussed the goal setting process and concluded that a habitat-diversity approach would be more appropriate to take, rather than a species-focused approach. This will require estimating what habitat types there were historically, what remains now, and then determining our goals for the future. The SAP is also evaluating GIS tools to help with assessment and priority setting, and will be working

with staff from NOAA to develop an appropriate tool for the WRP. The SAP has hired Martha Sutula to serve as a part-time staff member.

The second task the SAP has been pursuing is development of an extramurally-funded research program. The SAP has decided that the most efficient way to administer the research program would be through SeaGrant. Of the estimated \$500,000 per year for the program, \$400,000 would be for grants to established scientists and \$100,000 for graduate students. There is a clear shortage of wetland scientists being trained in Southern California.

In the coming months, the SAP will continue to work on the goal setting process and will also begin developing a regional monitoring strategy for Southern California wetlands. There are two EPA programs that will be focusing some attention on wetlands monitoring in California in the next few months. The WRP needs to consider funding a regional monitoring program in addition to project-specific monitoring.

Finally, the SAP and WRP recommend that two new members be added to the SAP, Dr. Mike Horn and Dr. Eric Stein. These two scientists will increase the watershed expertise on the panel.

Questions from the Board

Susan Hansch, who serves on the SeaGrant advisory panel, agreed with the recommendation to administer the research program through SeaGrant. She also noted that the SAP could play a role in helping to generate better wetlands proposals to SeaGrant now, even before specific funding has been secured for the research program. Ms. Hansch expressed strong support for the work the SAP will be doing on monitoring programs for the WRP, but emphasized that it will probably require more than two percent of the budget.

Wayne Baglin questioned whether it is wise to continue paying to remove Arundo from creeks and wetlands if it continues to return. Is there a more effective way to get rid of it? Is this something the SAP could take under consideration? Dr. Weisberg agreed that this would be a reasonable problem for the SAP to address, but that in the short-term their work load is already full. Mary Nichols commented that exotic species removal is an issue that transcends the WRP. Margo Murman, Santa Monica Mountains Resource Conservation District, noted that all of the counties in the State have now formed Weed Management Areas and this may be a forum for addressing the exotics problem. The WRP could be a partner, but not necessarily a leader, in exotic species control efforts. Rick Rayburn, California Department of Parks and Recreation, informed the Board that the Managers Group had spent a lot of time discussing the Arundo removal projects and the wide range of costs. As part of each project, groups will be asked to report back on the effectiveness of removal methods used. Rachel Couch, County of Santa Barbara, noted that at the Society for Ecological Restoration conference in Santa Barbara there was a presentation on various Arundo removal techniques and applications. Wanda Smith, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board, recommended using the Santa Ana River Team Arundo as a resource for exotic species removal information.

The Board asked the Managers Group to do a short report on why Arundo costs vary so significantly between projects.

John Norton, State Water Resources Control Board, commented that the SAP's work on documenting historical and current wetland conditions should be coordinated with the similar work being done for CCRISP.

Bud Laurent, CEC, stressed that it would be very helpful to WRP partners if the SAP could look at the various assessment tools used to evaluate resources and projects, and possibly make a recommendation of a tool(s) for use in the region.

Action Item: The Board approved the addition of Dr. Mike Horn and Dr. Eric Stein to the SAP.

9. Overview of Draft Regional Goals

Following up on the Symposium in October 2000, the Managers Group began drafting the Regional Strategy, including both overarching regional goals and county-level objectives. The county-level priorities will be revised and refined in partnership with the County Task Forces. Paul Michel summarized the outline of the document, and then discussed the six regional goals identified in the document:

1. Preserve and restore coastal wetlands.
2. Preserve and restore stream corridors and wetlands in coastal watersheds.
3. Recover habitat and species diversity.
4. Enhance the science of wetlands restoration in Southern California.
5. Promote education and compatible access related to coastal wetlands and watersheds.
6. Integrate wetlands recovery with other public objectives.

Once completed, the Regional Strategy will help to focus the work of the WRP. Many of the issues that have been discussed at this meeting are issues that the Managers Group hopes the Regional Strategy will help to clarify, including:

- How far up the watersheds should the WRP work? How much coastal connection is needed?
- How much upland area should be included in our acquisition program?
- Do isolated wetlands, such as vernal pools, fall within the purview of the WRP?
- What is the proper balance of acquisition, restoration, and planning?
- How much should water quality issues influence the WRP's work?

Board Comments

Mary Nichols stressed the importance of developing the Regional Strategy to take us beyond a collection of local, piecemeal efforts. She also recommended that the document indicate which component of the WRP would take the lead on each of the different goals.

Wayne Baglin noted that there are many different components to water quality, including aquatic habitat quality. The WRP needs to specifically define what aspect of water quality the WRP would try to address.

Steve Weisberg pointed out that Goal #2 represents a change focus for the WRP by moving into the watersheds.

Nancy Gilbert commented that Goal #1 can not be achieved without addressing Goal #2.

Bill Ahern noted that the strategy of reconnecting creeks to their floodplains would be infeasible in much of Southern California.

Lastly, Mr. Michel described the process for completing the Regional Strategy, including meetings with each of the task forces and soliciting and integrating agency comments. The Managers Group intends to present the revised Regional Strategy for Governing Board approval in October.

10. Related Partner Activities

a. State-Federal Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup

Brian Baird, California Resources Agency, and Dan Young, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, gave an overview of work being done by the Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup. The goal is to look at the issue of shoreline erosion from a statewide perspective and then focus in on problems on the regional level. Shoreline erosion has significant economic and environmental impacts. Both the state and federal governments are providing funding for shoreline erosion projects. The Resources Agency has developed a draft Coastal Erosion Policy and the sediment workgroup is holding seven public workshops to get comments on the policy. The workgroup intends to develop a Sediment Management Master Plan for the State. The four major goals of the program are to:

- 1) Coordinate California's coastal beach and watershed restoration, protection, and enhancement efforts with local, state, and federal stakeholders;
- 2) Better coordinate coastal sediment management and beach restoration activities with related ongoing watershed management, habitat restoration and protection, water quality enhancement, resource sustainability, and urban waterfront planning efforts;
- 3) Develop collaborative approaches to well-conceived, environmentally-sound coastal sediment and watershed management projects; and
- 4) Increase awareness of federal and state coastal beach and watershed protection, restoration, and enhancement policies, programs, and activities among local and regional governments.

Board Comments

Terry Tamminen recommended that the State or Regional Water Boards be included on the sediment workgroup, and also that the workgroup be expanded to include more non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is critical to get the participation and support of these groups early in the process. Mr. Baird responded that the sediment workgroup is discussing participation with a wide range of groups, including the Water Boards, several NGOs, and additional federal agencies.

b. State Water Resources Control Board Proposition 13 Grants

Bill Campbell provided the Board with an overview of the State Water Board's Proposition 13 grant program. There are three programs – watershed protection, nonpoint source pollution, and coastal nonpoint source pollution. The State Board has completed the first grant round, and expects to hold at least one additional round this fall. Some of the money in the Proposition has been earmarked by the legislature for particular programs. Details on the grant process and criteria are available on the State Board's website at: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/prop13/index.html>.

Mr. Campbell also reviewed for the Board how the State Revolving Fund could be used to provide low-cost loans for wetlands projects or nonpoint source pollution control projects.

Wayne Baglin added that Regional Water Boards can sometimes direct penalty monies to Supplemental Environmental Projects, including wetlands and watershed projects. The WRP should coordinate with the Regional Boards to target some of these funds towards WRP projects.

11. Attachments: Attendance sheets

Questions or comments about the meeting minutes should be directed to Trish Chapman at the Coastal Conservancy, (510) 286-0749, fax (510) 286-0470, or e-mail: tchapman@igc.org.